DECENTRALIZATION AND GOVERNANCE IN TUNISIA:
An Assessment and Discussion of Strategic Options

Paper Prepared for
AID/RHUDO/NENA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This study and the subsequent analysis are aimed at developing a better understanding of:

1) the current status of decentralization in Tunisia;
2) current trends in the evolution of that system;
3) the degree to which that system contributes to good governance;
4) the links between governance and democratization; and
5) the areas of potential for successful interventions in support of democratization and the associated liberalization of markets.

The key hypothesis which underlies the analysis on which this paper is based is the idea that **decentralization, both as a process and as an end state in terms of organization and operations, is closely related to the quality of governance in countries at every level of development, but particularly in developing countries such as Tunisia.**

The relative quality of decentralization in any country (D) can be judged as a function of three important factors: 1) scope (S); 2) intensity (I); and 3) commitment (C).

$$D = f(S, I, C)$$

Each of these important factors is defined in turn and subsequently operationalized in terms of objectively verifiable indicators which can be used as the basis for analysis of the Tunisian system.

When we regard the combination of scope, intensity and commitment to decentralization, Tunisia does reasonably well. The quality of decentralization in Tunisia places it in the role of one of the leaders among African and Middle Eastern nations. Although there is a long way to go, there has been considerable progress over the years. It has gone well beyond the stage of rhetoric, and although not universally endorsed by Tunisian political elites and intellectuals, deconcentration has become a valued part of the Tunisian polity.

Based on this preliminary analysis, it seems reasonably safe to argue that Tunisia has passed a significant threshold along the way to a fully institutionalized system of deconcentrated power at the regional and municipal levels. To the extent that sound governance is developing in Tunisia, the program of decentralization can be said to be an important contributing factor. Supporting and strengthening of the process of deconcentration as a way of improving governance and strengthening democracy is clearly indicated.

In light of these important developments, it is recommended that a strategy be developed to provide support to the growth of good governance by institutionalizing decentralized administration. The most important goal ought to be to increase the responsive capacity of local administration. Three tactics seem worth pursuing: 1) improving the quality of elected officials and the civil service in the municipalities and regions; 2) increasing the quantity and quality of information available to local decision makers to assess policy options and make informed decisions; 3) support the growth of associational groups capable of participating in the political process. These in turn suggest three practical areas for possible support by the donor community: training, improved communications and information, and support for associational groups.

A Tunisian institution(s) which can provide support to both elected and administrative municipal officials in terms of training, policy analysis, applied research, documentation services and communications is (are) needed. A.I.D. should target its efforts at developing such a support institution so as to help sustain the momentum toward democratization already under way.

Introduction

The work on which this brief paper is based was undertaken in an effort to assist the AID/Tunis, more precisely the Regional Housing and Urban Development Office (RHUDO/NENA) in its efforts to support the Agency's Democratic Pluralism Initiative (DPI). For that purpose two consultants, Dr. Richard Vengroff, Dean of the Division of International Affairs at the University of Connecticut and Dr. Hatem Ben Salem, Director of CREA of ENA in Tunis, have conducted a very preliminary study of Tunisia's system of decentralized management at the level of the municipalities and other relevant levels of administration. Since Tunisia is a unitary state, it is technically inappropriate to talk about local government(s).

This study and the subsequent analysis to be done are aimed at developing a better understanding of:

1) the current status of decentralization in Tunisia;
2) current trends in the evolution of that system;
3) the degree to which that system contributes to good governance;
4) the links between governance and democratization; and
5) the areas of potential for successful interventions in support of democratization and the associated liberalization of markets.

Using these data as a starting point, the team has elaborated a provisional strategy for AID/RHUDO/NENA to assist the Government and people of Tunisia with the process of improving the quality of governance.

It should be emphasized that this analysis and the associated recommendations are based on a very preliminary study of the situation in Tunisia. Clearly, a more systematic, in depth study of local decision making and decentralization in Tunisia is required before more definitive inferences and conclusions can be reached. Therefore, the recommendations included in this report should be considered to be tentative. Furthermore, the current document requires significant expansion and revisions before being finalized. The authors look forward to comments, suggestions and a critique from their colleagues in AID and the Government of Tunisia.

We wish to thank all those in AID/Tunis, particularly the staff of the RHUDO office, and the numerous Tunisian Government officials and citizens who gave freely of their time and effort to assist the consultants in the completion of their tasks.

Key Working Hypotheses

As noted in A.I.D.'s Democracy and Governance Policy Paper (1991:8),

> "the objective of the democracy initiative is to support democratic political development, helping to establish enduring political practices, institution and values which mobilize participation, channel competition, respect basic human rights, and promote open, lawful and accountable governance. the focus of the Democracy initiative is how decisions get made: the processes, procedures and values of political systems."

From this perspective, the issue of good governance becomes critical.

There have been numerous efforts to define governance and a broad debate exists regarding its many components. As a point of departure, the definition provided in the Africa Bureau's draft "Governance Working Paper" (Charlick, 1992: 2) which draws on the work of Hyden (1991) seems quite useful. "Governance is the impartial, transparent management of public affairs through the generation of a regime (set of rules) accepted as constituting legitimate authority, for the purpose of promoting and enhancing societal values that are sought by individuals and groups." However, this definition appears to be static in that it lacks a firm link with the issues of change or development. Therefore, for purposes of this paper, we must also consider the broad definition provided by Landell-Mills as a base against which the impact of decentralization can be assessed. He defines governance as "the use of political authority and exercise of control over a society and the management of its resources for social and economic development" (Landell-Mills, 1991: 3). He goes on to say that his definition "encompasses the nature of functioning of a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision making processes, policy formulation, implementation capacity, information flows, effectiveness of leadership, and the nature of the relationship between rulers and ruled."

Drawing upon these two definitions, the quality of governance can be seen as depending very heavily on a variety of factors, the most important of which can be summarized by the following:

1) transparency in the elaboration, execution, and evaluation of budgets;

2) open access to and opportunities for participation;

3) the initiation of a variety of actions and policies by the public or their elected representatives, often at several different levels of government or administration;
4) government responsiveness to demands expressed by the populace and/or their chosen representatives;
5) a free flow of ideas and information which makes policies and the choice of policies an open, informed process;
6) a regular and open procedure for the selection of leaders.

All of the above reflect the broader issue of accountability. They therefore respond directly to the primary foci of the democracy initiative: "strengthening democratic representation...supporting respect for human rights...promoting lawful governance...and encouraging democratic values" (A.I.D., 1991: 9-10). It should be made clear that the purpose of this paper is not to provide a full discussion of the notion of governance but to see how it relates to some key concerns of municipal government and the quality of the associated policy choices. However, it is worth noting that the concept of decentralization plays a prominent role in much of the thinking associated with governance (Hyden, 1991; Charlick, 1992).

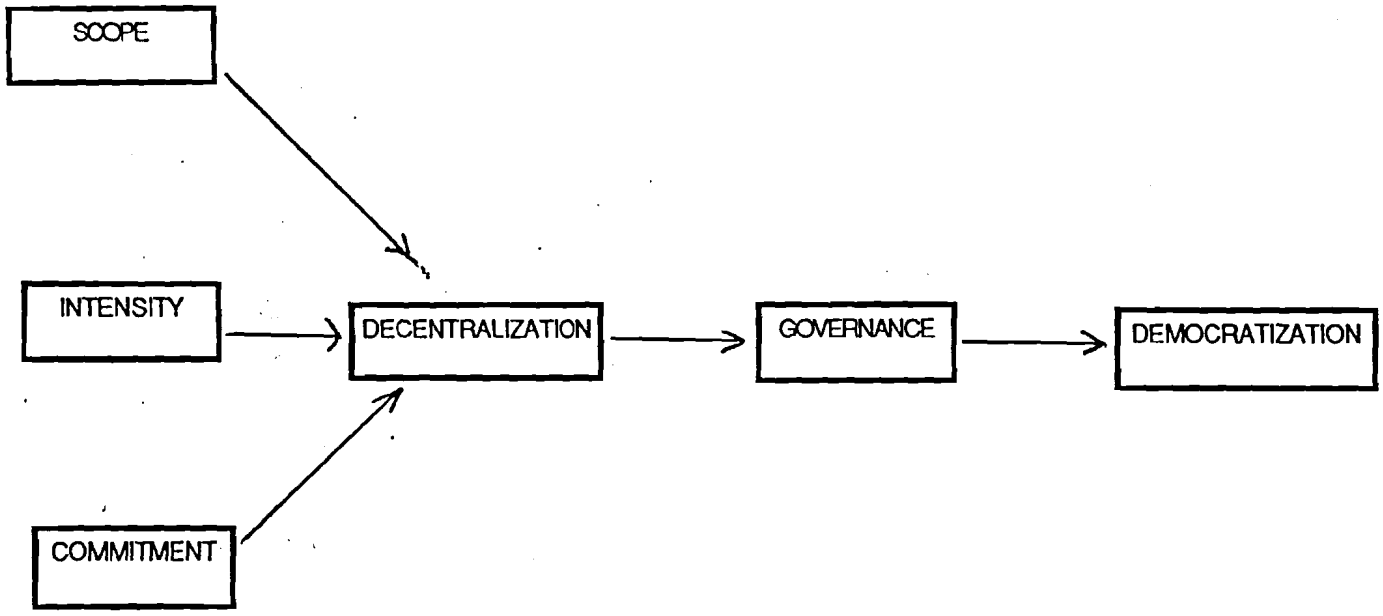
The key hypothesis which underlies the analysis on which this paper is based is the idea that **decentralization, both as a process and as an end state in terms of organization and operations, is closely related to the quality of governance in countries at every level of development, but particularly in developing countries such as Tunisia**. For our purposes, the widely accepted definition of decentralization provided by Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema (1983: 9) is quite useful:

> "Decentralization can be defined as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to: (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies, (b) subordinate units or levels of government, (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, (d) area wide, regional or functional authorities, or (e) nongovernmental private or voluntary organizations."

They go on to identify the four basic types of decentralization, devolution, deconcentration, delegation, and privatization.

Findings on the impact of decentralization in developing countries remain quite mixed. Much of the inconsistency can be attributed to the fact that the correlation between "formal" decentralization and successfully implemented decentralization is unfortunately quite low, or

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DECENTRALIZATION, GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIZATION



in some cases nonexistent. While numerous countries have undertaken so-called decentralization programs, primarily involving deconcentration and delegation, rather than devolution, few have demonstrated the political will necessary for successful implementation (Conyers, 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1984; Chikolo, 1981; Vengroff and Johnston, 1987). However, the relationship between "successful" decentralization and "good" governance is hypothesized by these authors to be quite high.

Therefore, in order to undertake an assessment of the relationship between the program of decentralization currently being implemented in Tunisia and its impact, real and potential, on the quality of governance in the country, we must first establish criteria in the form of empirically verifiable indicators of the seriousness or quality of decentralization programs. Using those indicators we can presumably arrive at a preliminary assessment of the current state of decentralization in Tunisia, its contribution to good governance, its potential future contribution in this area, whether AID/RHUDO sponsored interventions are appropriate, and if so how and at what levels they should be targeted.

The Measurement of Decentralization

There are no universally agreed to criteria for assessing the quality of decentralization. The criteria suggested here are identified as critical and broadly applicable by these authors. They are not the only factors, and the operationalization of these variables may take many forms. A review of the literature and years working with decentralization programs in Africa and elsewhere have led us to the provisional formulation which follows.

The relative quality of decentralization in any country (D) can be judged as a function of three important factors: 1) scope (S); 2) intensity (I); and 3) commitment (C).

$$D = f\ (S, I, C)$$

Each of these important factors will be defined in turn and subsequently operationalized in terms of measurable indicators which can be mutually agreed upon, independently verified, and used as the basis for comparisons between political systems. This being a preliminary pass, they will of course require further refinement.

Scope refers to the breadth or coverage of the program of decentralization. Does it have truly national implications or is it very localized and limited in terms of intended application? Scope will be

measured in terms of variables such as:

a) Geographic Coverage - Does the program of decentralization apply to the entire territory of the country in a geographic sense or is its application limited to a particular region, city, type of city, or zone?;

b) Population - Are all of the people in the nation considered to be involved in the decentralization program or is it limited to specific groups? Is there room for popular participation by all of the adult population or only for some particular subset thereof?;

c) Substantive Areas of Concern - how broad is the subject matter which can be addressed by the various decentralized units or levels? Is their competence circumscribed by services and activities strictly defined by the central state and how limited or broad are the areas that they can address?

In the cases of all three variables mentioned above, the greater the level, the more significant the degree of decentralization and the greater the potential contribution to quality governance.

Intensity refers to the levels of the bureaucracy and the nations finance which are formally involved. What levels of the bureaucracy have been successfully penetrated by some form of decentralization or are directly involved in the decentralized design and implementation of policy? This can be measured in terms of variables such as:

a) Type of Decentralization - Can the decentralization of the system be best characterized as deconcentration, delegation, devolution, privatization, or some combination thereof? Presumably the less direct state control exercised and the greater the independence of the localities, the greater the intensity. Independently, this variable should not be considered a necessary or sufficient condition for producing greater accountability and good governance; In combination with the other factors here identified, it has considerable importance;

b) Personnel Coverage - What percentage of the civil service formally falls under the program of decentralization and what is the relative size of the group which remains under full centralized administration and control?;

c) Budgetary Implications - What percentage of the national budgetary allocations go to support lower (decentralized)

levels of government/administration? What is the trend in terms of the ratio of locality to central expenditures over time?;

Presumably as the budgetary implications, personnel coverage and profoundness (type) of decentralization increase, the level of accountability and the quality of governance increase.

Commitment refers to the level and quality of support for decentralization by the central government and its top policy makers and the degree to which that support manifests itself at various levels of administration/government. It can be operationalized in terms of:

a) Legal Structure - The formal specification of authority through the creation of appropriate legal (texts in Francophone systems) mechanisms which establish and define local units and permit decentralized management to be implemented;

b) Endurance - Is there a relatively long history of decentralized management? Have programs of decentralization survived regime changes, or are they short lived and identified as regime specific?

c) Personnel Quality - This refers to the relative quality and level of personnel in the bureaucracy seconded or posted to the lower levels of government. Considerations in this regard may include questions associated with whether or not a separate "local" public service has been created, and on recruitment, salaries, benefits, training opportunities, and career comparisons between local and central officials;

d) Finance - Have adequate means for local finance been set aside for lower levels of administration/government either at the national level or through responsibility and control over local taxes. This includes an examination of the level and types of taxes collected, possibilities for an expanding tax or revenue base, and opportunities for government grants;

e) Elected Officials - Here we refer to an assessment of the quality of elected officials at the local level, their level of experience, and education. This variable also refers to the degree to which local elected officials are perceived as having a direct link with a particular geographic district or set of constituents for whom they serve a representative function;

f) Official Endorsements - Have top officials of the government, both political and administrative formally

endorsed decentralization? How often, in what contexts, and at what levels?;

g) Participation - Are there regular opportunities for popular participation in the process of local policy making, implementation, and evaluation?

All of the above measures can be looked at in terms of both levels and rates of change. It is extremely important that both of these be considered. While the level may be relatively low in a developing country and hence the contribution of decentralization to good governance limited at a given point in time, significant changes can be expected to take place in some nations. These will perhaps be indicative of the development of serious potential for changes in the quality of governance. Interventions can be seen as logical and efficacious in the case where serious changes are already taking place in terms of decentralization, accountability and good governance, or where they are anticipated and could be promoted by such assistance.

At this stage in the elaboration of a comparative methodology for operationalizing decentralization, much of the assessment must be based on judgmental data. In the long run, as comparable data become available on decentralization in a large number of countries, more complex indicators based on multivariate analysis will be developed. In the interim, a panel of experts is being used to assign ordinal values on a five point scale, to each of the components of decentralization, scope, intensity, and commitment, based on the values of the variables included as operational measures of each.

Having established criteria for assessing decentralization and its potential contribution to good governance, we will now proceed with a selective description of key decentralization issues in Tunisia. These issues are identified in the following sections as finance, human resources, decentralized management organization, and the formal legal structure (the primary texts). This will be followed by the application of the operational model for assessing decentralization to the current Tunisian context. In the final section, these data and findings will be used to identify strategic policy options for AID/RHUDO/NENA for possible application in Tunisia.

Decentralization in Tunisia

It should be underlined that, since independence, Tunisia has always been and will undoubtedly continue to be a unitary state. That is, all

levels of administration depend on the central government for their powers and very existence. As noted by the Director of ENA, "there are no local governments in Tunisia." There is only the central government. There are, however, powers which have been deconcentrated to the local levels of the administration. Even while deconcentration is taking place, the Ministry of the Interior continues to maintain a parallel set of structures characteristic of centralized territorial administration to represent the power of the State. The governors and délégués still play the role of "préfét" and "sous-préfét" respectively, although the role of the governor has been slightly modified. In the rural area "Omdahs" still serve as heads of sectors under the "délégués" (Moudoud, 1989). All local units described below should be viewed in the context of deconcentration and delegation rather than of devolution and the development of independent powers and local governments.

The most important representative units in the system of territorial administration are the regional councils and the municipal councils. The regional councils, of which there are 23 (as of 1991), were first created as Conseil de Gouvernorat in 1963 (Lakhdar, 1991). They were significantly modified in February 1989 so as to make them less an advisory body for the governor and more an independent, representative policy formulating and planning body. The municipalities (250 in 1991), first established in 1956, became serious (de jure) organs of decentralization in 1975, gained increased importance (de facto capabilities) in 1985 (Ben Salah, 1989), and became very serious concerns since the regime change in 1987. The principal texts which established the gouvernorats and the municipalities are summarized in another section of this report.

The deconcentration of the administrative system in Tunisia takes two forms, 1) deconcentration within the context of the central ministries and 2) delegation and deconcentration in the context of the territorial administration through the creation of regional councils, municipal councils, and rural councils. In the case of the former, the chief official of each ministry at the regional level is officially under the direction of the Governor of the region. All work at the regional level theoretically must be coordinated by the Governor and the Secretary General of the gouvernorats. All central government projects at the regional level are supposed to be approved and overseen by the Governor and the regional council. The importance of this reform is demonstrated by the fact that the governor and his staff even manage the budgets for these projects.

Further deconcentration takes place within the context of the

various ministries operating at the regional and local levels. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture has helped establish rural associations, AIC (Associations d'Interet Collective) to help manage the distribution of water. These associations are delegated the authority to manage local water distribution, to collect charges to individual households (in some cases even with regular meters, in most cases, however, based on approximate family utilization), to pay for repairs and maintenance of equipment, and to make investments with the profits from the association. This greatly facilitates the work of the Ministry, reduces costs, and allows for popular input into the process of policy implementation. The Ministry of Health and several other ministries are also involved in similar collaborative efforts with the population.

In the context of the territorial administration under the Ministry of the Interior (with the involvement of other ministries, most notably Finance), the regional councils, municipalities and rural councils have been established and modified over time. The gouvernorats, the regional councils, are composed of the region's deputies in the National Assembly, the presidents (mayors) of the municipalities in the region, and the presidents of the rural councils. The governors, who serve as presidents of the councils, also appoint individuals with special backgrounds and knowledge to serve on the council or its committees as nonvoting members. Although they are charged with regional planning and the coordination of all government programs in the region, it is the Governor, especially his secretary general for administration, who actually handle most regular operations. The mayors, as members of the council, play an important role and do have some independence in prioritizing actions at the regional level. The governor is not a representative of the region, but an appointee of the central government named by the President of the Republic to represent him at that level. Thus, once again, emphasis should be placed on these councils as playing the role of deconcentrated administrative structures of the state, rather than as independent local governments in a politically decentralized system characterized by devolution. "La région est ainsi organisée davantage comme un espace d'articulation des administrations centrales et locales que comme un niveau spécifique et supplémentaire de gestion et d'auto administration" (Lakhdar, 1989: 80).

The municipal councils, like the regional councils are strictly creations of the State and can be dissolved by the State. They have been assigned certain key functions associated with the provision of services, particularly at the municipal level. "C'est une issue inévitable dans un

Etat unitaire ou l'échelon local doit obéir en dernière analyse à la volonté du pouvoir central" (Ben Salah, 1989: 139). They also levy and collect a variety of local taxes. For the municipalities, the most important of these in terms of total revenue are the "tax locative" (applied to residences), the tax on business establishments and, taxes on markets. Their expenses and investments are primarily in municipal services and infrastructure rather than directly in economic development. Within this framework, and with close financial oversight by the State, the municipalities can initiate action, decide on their budgets, hire staff, and contract for services. The councils, which vary in size according to population, are elected for five year terms on the basis of a majority list system. The mayor (president) is selected by the counselors from among themselves and serves for a period coterminus with that of the council. Because of the one party dominant status of the regime, these elections have so far not really been competitive but are based on nomination to the party list of the dominant ruling party (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, RCD).

Within the context of the financial and personnel constraints imposed upon them, decision making in the municipal councils seems to be relatively open. Committee hearings and council meetings are open to the public. Although attendance is relatively low, citizens groups do take advantage of meetings, especially committee meetings, to make their wishes known. The potential for access for NGOs and associational groups appears to be relatively high. The neighborhood associations (comité du quartier) are especially important in this regard. With appropriate nurturing, these groups could eventually become very salient actors at the municipal level.

The rural councils, the membership of which is appointed by the Governor, can best be regarded as "pre-municipalities." That is they are small towns which, with appropriate population growth (minimum size is about 5,000), will eventually obtain the status of municipalities. They have no budget, very few resources and no permanent staff. They are represented by their president on the regional council. They do not cover all rural areas not served by municipal councils. Thus, some rural residents have no formal representation on a local representative council.

The relatively new element added to the decentralization equation in Tunisia is the "quartier" associations. They have existed only since the rise to power of President Ben Ali. The President stated that "nous avons en outre ordonné la création de comités de quartier dans le but de sensibiliser le citoyen à son role civique et de l'amener ainsi à participer spontaniément aux activitiés relatives à l'hygiène et à la protection de

l'environnement..." These associations, for which formal texts do not yet exist, have begun to play a very important role in the life of many municipalities, a role which may increase significantly in the near future and extend well beyond the functions identified for them by the President.

The quartier committees appear to function as local non governmental groups capable of mobilizing the population in support of a variety of issues. They do not limit themselves to those problems involving the environment and cleaning up their respective neighborhoods as suggested by the President. Although we did not have the opportunity to select and view a representative sample of quartier associations, the associations with which we did have direct contact represented both poor working class and clearly "bourgeois" neighborhoods. In addition, we had the opportunity to talk to many Tunisian central and local level officials about them. Therefore, these findings can be regarded as at least indicative of the breadth of experience which exists in "quartier" committees.

The quartier association visited in Ariana, a suburb of Tunis, appears to be very active in trying to fight environmental degradation brought on by a combination of uncontrolled growth and the failure of the central government in the past to insist on environmental impact studies. As a result, the area of Ariana represented by the committee is suffering from flooding of the land because of a rising water table, the destruction of many valuable fruit trees, and various health and insect problems from the effluent from Tunis which flows through the area. They are suffering from the externalities of an internationally funded project designed to develop a new area around Lake Tunis.

This group is structured around a ten member "bureau" which has a diverse but highly motivated and potentially very powerful set of members. The leaders are relatively old and are drawn from the upper economic classes of the country. They are working like a classic local interest group, building and using alliances with other groups such as the local mosque (one of the members of the bureau is an Imam), with the RCD party cells, with local officials, and with an environmental group in order to get a fair hearing for their cause. Members have also used connections in the central government, the Governor's office, and on the municipal council to some advantage. They have mobilized local supporters, held a number of meetings and have even consulted lawyers to represent them in a possible judicial procedure. Their main difficulty appears to be that they are trying to deal with a problem, the source of which is well beyond the bounds of the authority of a single municipality or even region.

Another quartier association in which data were collected is based in a very poor working class neighborhood of the city of Kairouan. In spite of the humble origins of the members, the group appeared to be extremely well organized and highly motivated. They have produced an inventory of key issues for the quartier, prioritized those issues, noted the level of progress made in addressing each, and are making plans for future action. They have been successful in organizing their respective constituents, collecting relatively modest amounts of money for local projects, and engaging in neighborhood cleanup and self help projects. Although they are independent of the party, they cooperate with the party cell and have been relatively effective in making the municipal and regional councils aware of their needs. By engaging in several local projects on a voluntary basis, they are able to put some pressure on government officials for help. For example, they helped build a local nursery school. These authors observed them in an informal setting persuasively and forcefully making the case to the Secretary General of the Gouvernorat to extend electric lines to the school, with the costs to be paid by the regional council.

These groups appear to represent an excellent base for the development of grass roots democracy. They have thus far been allowed to function in a relatively free and open manner because they are regarded as civic rather than political organizations. Citizen support seems to be forthcoming because these associations are perceived to be totally independent of the Tunisian State. Concentrating on environmental and local community issues, which are viewed as apolitical, and steering clear of political party activity, is, at the current juncture, a very sound strategy. If these groups prove successful, it is quite likely that they will expand the substantive areas of concern for which they provide input to and make demands on the municipal and regional councils, and even the central government.

A major potential danger to these associations is posed by the upcoming national conference on the quartier associations. There is a strong likelihood that formal texts will be promulgated at that time which will greatly circumscribe the scope of their activities and have as an objective, the co-optation of these organizations. Once again, within the context of a centralized state, these associations will be delegated those powers which are perceived as directly consistent with central government policy and interests. Overall, however, it appears that the "genie" has been let out of the bottle. It will be extremely difficult for the government to not let these groups continue with their relatively independent role of promoting democratic participatory initiatives from

below.

Associational life in Tunisia appears to be quite rich. Other associational groups could potentially play an important role in promoting overall decentralization and democratization. Some groups, such as the Tunisian Federation of Municipalities, appear to be little more than paper organizations (Minus, 1992). Assessment of the capabilities and potential of other such organizations is beyond the scope of this paper, but is a direction worth pursuing in a subsequent study to be funded by A.I.D.

Decentralization Issues

Finance

Finance remains a key issue in the life of local administrative agencies in Tunisia as it is in virtually all other countries. There are considerable differences in the size of and financial resources available to Tunisia's 250 municipalities (this number has recently grown to 264). In recognition of this, the Ministry of Finance classifies the municipalities into four different categories. Category One municipalities, the four major industrial and tourist centers (Tunis, Ariana, Sfax, Sousse), account for almost a third (32.3%) of all municipal revenues raised in Tunisia. Category Two (n=59, 1990) represents the regional centers, including most regional capitals. Together they account for the largest single share of municipal revenues nationally (45%). The largest category, Category Three (n=133, 1990), includes more than half of all municipalities, most of which are small, regional market towns. In spite of their numbers, they together account for only about twenty percent of the revenues raised by municipalities. The fastest growing municipality type, Category Four (n=50, 1990), is comprised of the smallest, and in most cases newest, municipalities. Their revenue base is extremely small and they collectively account for only about three percent of the nations municipal revenues.

As a whole, the communes in Tunisia are able to finance less than half of their expenses from their own revenues. The most important sources of revenue for the communes are the property taxes on residential and commercial properties and taxes on markets. The most significant source of support outside their proper local revenue, is the "Fond Commun des Collectivités Locales" (FCCL, 41% of ordinary receipts for 1990). This fund was initiated in 1975 as part of the basic administrative reform designed to increase the revenue and capabilities of the municipalities. Although there is considerable variation both within and between

categories of municipalities, on the average, it accounts for a very important part of the revenue available to local communes for their annual budgets. In some of the smallest communes it accounts for up to 75 percent of their annual revenue. The fund itself, was until 1988 composed of a variety of taxes collected at the national level and specially allocated to regional and local governments. Since 1988, the FCCL is funded through the central budget.

This fund, FCCL, (which amounted to 96 million dinars during FY 92 - approximately $108 million U.S.) is initially divided into two parts, 75% which is allocated to collectivities and 25% which is kept as a reserve. The reserve is used to fund parastatal organizations like SONED and STEG which provide basic services like water and electricity and ONAS which provides basic waste water service. In addition, a portion of the reserve is designated for the special needs of Tunis and to assist the municipalities which serve as the "capitals" of the regions (gouvernorats). The remaining 75% is divided between the urban communes (86%) and the regional councils (14%).

The part of the FCCL allocated to the communes is divided into three parts, one for basic liquidity (10%), one part based on population (45%), and one part based on incentives associated with the local tax effort (45%). The first of these, the smallest of the three funds, is divided equally among all 250 municipalities in the country to provide a core of funds, available to even the smallest and poorest of them. This amounted to about 25,000 Dinars per commune in 1992. The second fund is divided among the communes based on the percentage of the total national urban population living in the particular commune. Hence, the larger communes receive the most revenue from this part of the fund. For example, the six largest municipalities receive nearly twenty seven percent of these funds while the smallest 131 receive only about thirteen percent.

The third part of the FCCL is designed to encourage or provide an incentive to communes to collect their local taxes, more precisely, the tax "locative." The tax "locative," the largest single local municipal revenue source, is the tax that the communes levy on the value of properties, houses, apartments and commercial buildings, based on their projected value as rental units. For tax purposes, the assessment value of a property is fixed at 24 percent of the estimated annual rental value. Thus, a property which is estimated to rent for 100 dinars per month or 1200 D per year would be assessed a "tax locative" of 288 D (1200 x .24) annually. There is an upper limit to the total amount that any given property owner, including commercial operators can pay (20,000 per year) regardless of

the value of the property.

In order to determine the distribution of this part of the FCCL, a three year period is used as a base. This is done so as to minimize problems which might be created by unanticipated variations which occur in any given year due to economic, environmental, or other conditions which could have an important influence on the short run tax collection abilities of a municipality. Hence, the average total collection of the "tax locative" over a three year period (the current year plus the two preceding years) is used. This figure is then divided by the total "tax locative" collected nationally in all of the communes, again averaged over three years. The resulting percentage (the percentage of the total tax collected nationally which was collected in that particular commune) is then multiplied by the total funds included in the incentive portion of the FCCL to determine the revenue to be provided to that commune.

There are several important implications for municipal finance from the way this tax is collected:

1) The incentive portion of the fund clearly rewards the richer communes. Nationally, it is estimated that only between forty and sixty percent of the potential "tax locative" is actually collected. This figure is lowest in the smaller, poorly staffed municipalities. The larger, richer communes more frequently have competent staff to do the assessments and to assist with assessments and the collection of the tax (it is actually collected by the "receveur d'etat").

2) Since there is a relatively low limit to the total "tax sur établissments" (the commercial equivalent of the tax locative) which is paid by industrial and commercial establishments, (20,000 Dinars/year) the potential impact on the tax of a strong industrial base is diminished. This tends to modify the advantages which some of the richer communes might naturally enjoy. In fact some municipal officials complained that the tax limit on large companies in their areas is unfair. They even suggested that the tax on some enterprises is much lower than the tax would be on comparable properties devoted to private residences. It also has the impact of subsidizing industry while leaving the municipalities in which they are located and whose services they consume with the problems of urban growth, but not the revenue to pay for addressing those problems and the necessary services.

3) Because the distribution of this fund is based on a three year average, the advantages of even a dramatic increase in tax collection rates in any given year may be relatively difficult for municipal officials and councils to perceive. It is only over a period of two or three years that the

impact on FCCL revenues is likely to be really noticed. The apparent failure of many municipal officials to understand or perceive the direct and indirect advantages of increasing the rate of compliance with the "tax locative," also serves to limit the potential impact of the incentives provided.

4) A small but growing number of communes (71 as of 1990) have been able to increase their success in collecting the tax due to computerization and interventions such as the state of the art system provided by USAID to Kairouan. The result is that these communes receive a double advantage, increased local collection and increased allocations from the FCCL. However, since the total pie to be distributed under the FCCL is based on national taxes collected and not directly related to the total collected under the "tax locative," the impact is that the poorer and/or smaller communes which are not likely to obtain or be able to implement such new technology, fall further behind in their allocations under this part of the fund in both the relative and absolute senses.

It is clear that the current formula for allocating the incentive portion of the FCCL does not really have the desired effect. It is estimated by a knowledgeable official in the Ministry of Finance that the officials in only about 30 percent of the communes realize that there are incentives in this portion of the FCCL. This was duly noted in the course of interviews conducted at the municipal level. Responsible officials in even some of the richer, more modern communes professed ignorance of the incentives. This may result from the fact that the regulations are very complex, officials lack appropriate training and information, and the tax is actually collected by an agent who works for the State rather than the commune.

There is an additional serious problem associated with reliance on the "tax locative." It is based on an assessment of the rental value of property. Determining the rental value is often difficult. The agents who do the assessing are poorly trained and paid. Furthermore, they do not have the right to enter a house, and, therefore, must make their calculations on the basis of the number of rooms as indicated by the owner. Small bribes are often given to lower the room count and therefore the assessment. In addition, elected counselors indicate that they must spend an enormous amount of time addressing the complaints and appeals of their constituents who feel that their property has been unfairly assessed. The results have an impact on both local taxes collected and on the FCCL allocated to the commune. Better training and broader dissemination of computerized systems of record keeping could serve to increase local tax collection.

This brief note is not intended to give a full view of the problems of finance for the communes but only to highlight the difficulties that they face by examining some of the problems associated with, what is for now, the most important tax and central government contribution. A full evaluation of the financial status of the municipalities should probably be undertaken. It should be noted, however, that the finances available to the municipalities are not adequate for the services they are charged with providing at the local level. For example, the total revenue available to the 250 municipalities from both local taxes and central government grants, subsidies and loans in 1989 and 1990 was only 204 million and 215 million dinars, respectively (This is well below the annual budget for a typical land grant university in the U.S.). However, in these same years, due largely to the complexity of the accounting and approval process imposed on the municipalities by the central authorities, they were unable to spend all of the money available to them. For 1989 approximately 85 percent was actually spent, while the comparable figure for 1990 is only slightly higher at 87.4 percent. However, it is clear that major difficulty occurs in the area of development related expenses. In that area only 76.7 percent of available funds were actually spent in 1990. Almost all of the revenue allocated to ordinary expenses (96%) were spent in 1990. There is of course, considerable variation between municipalities in this respect.

While the Government of Tunisia seems committed to decentralization, the emphasis is clearly on closely controlled deconcentration, rather than on anything approaching devolution. The municipalities are widely viewed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance as the local representatives of central government authority. The class I and II municipalities have their budgets reviewed by the central ministries. Budgets for the smaller class III and IV municipalities are reviewed at the regional level. However, even the latter often end up being reviewed at the central level because of the lack of adequate staff and analytic capabilities in the regions. The central authorities, through the budgetary, accounting and auditing processes are, at this point, not prepared to cede much authority to the local level. Neither of these Ministries is likely to give up the political power which is associated with control and oversight of those processes. They are quick to point out that these collectivities profit not only from the FCCL and direct support but from other projects run by the government in their respective areas, customs benefits, salaries for tax collectors (receveurs), and State run enterprises like the electric and water companies. Some Tunisian officials have suggested that the State'

fiscality should be separated from the fiscality of the municipalities, but it is not at all clear that this is a position shared very widely in the central ministries.

The situation regarding the regions is somewhat different. The governors are the regional representatives of the state. It is not insignificant, however, that the membership of the regional councils include the mayors of the municipalities and the presidents of the rural councils, as well as the region's deputies in the National Assembly. Although budgets allocated to them directly are relatively small, the fact that they now manage centrally funded development projects (including the budgets) indicates that very serious deconcentration of power is taking place in financial and policy implementation.

Human Resource Issues

The other almost universally cited problem for the communes is that of personnel. It reflects the quantity and quality of staff that the municipalities can either afford to engage or coax into working for a level of administration other than the central ministries in Tunis. On the one hand, the increasing demands for services at the municipal and regional level require more and better paid, better trained local functionaries. On the other hand, economic conditions, administrative reform and structural adjustment all require less government spending and fewer government agents. In addition, the tax base and other revenues available to the municipalities are not growing at a rate anywhere near that of the growth in demand for services and qualified staff to manage and implement them. Already, about a third of all municipal expenses go to salaries.

All but a few of the biggest municipalities lack the staff they feel that they need. In fact a large number (60) of the smallest municipalities lack even the most important core staff, the Secretary General (the principal management official for the communes). Several key problems contribute significantly to this situation. Foremost among these is the fact that service in the regions or in the municipalities is not regarded as positive from a career standpoint. In the smaller, more isolated municipalities the quality of life, access to schools for their children, good quality housing for themselves and the variety of cultural attractions available in Tunis are lacking. Opportunities for salaried employment for their wives are also limited in that environment. This sense of isolation from the mainstream is even felt in the larger cities. The opportunity for training and participation in seminars is considered to be very important perk. Many functionaries feel that those outside the capital rarely receive

timely information on, or invitations to participate in workshops and seminars. One functionary, herself a native of Sfax, the second largest city, said that she would love to live there where she could be close to her family, however, she felt that doing so would severely limit her career.

In terms of the service, functionaries employed at the level of the municipalities are nominated by the Ministry of the Interior, maintain their connections with the service, and have some opportunities for promotion. They are , however, paid by the municipality and have a lower ceiling in terms of advancement than do cadres with comparable training employed at the center. Because of the lack of trained professionals, many municipal tasks are performed by laborers. They constitute nearly 86 percent of all municipal employees, whereas administrative personnel account for only seven percent.

The situation in the smallest municipalities poses the severest problem of personnel and requires some immediate efforts to find remedies. Without officials available to do the technical work and to design and implement policy, decentralization at this level remains a hollow shell. For example, communal budgets often have to be redone by the staff of the "gouvernorats" or of the central ministries (Finance and Interior). In addition, the five year technical urban investment program (Plan d'Investissements Communal, PIC) prepared by each municipality, is often more a wish list than a plan. It is, therefore, generally ignored by the central ministries. If the intention is that the people and their representatives get more directly involved in proposing and implementing development programs and services in the municipalities, and that "transparence" be widely practiced, the professional staff of these entities must be able to perform at least the most fundamental planning and budgeting exercises.

At the level of the regions (gouvernorats) there has been a major change in the orientation of officials representing the various ministries. The top representatives of each of the ministries is now directly responsible to the governor. The governor in turn is charged with coordinating the work of all ministries operating in the territory he oversees. One of the key constraints on regional administrations in many countries has been the mixed loyalties and resultant reticence of agents in one ministry who find a matrix management format imposed on them to work outside their "home" ministry's structure. The tendency is to serve the interests of the technical ministry rather than the priorities conceived at the regional level and the regional plan. Now, the top regional official for the ministries are all evaluated by their respective governors rather

than their direct superior in their own ministry. This has not resolved all of the problems at the regional level, but it has apparently resulted in greater cooperation in many "gouvernorats." It can not be emphasized too strongly how important a step this is as a means of underlining government support for deconcentration.

Although Tunisia has a relatively large number of well trained personnel and is in the process of improving conditions of employment outside of Tunis, several problems remain. The collectivities often lack the resources to engage the personnel they need, even when they can find willing and qualified individuals. Duplication of effort takes place, especially in the area of finance. Functionaries find working with the day to day pressures imposed on them by local elected officials difficult to adapt to. Elected officials often are not sensitive to the needs of functionaries, as indicated by the fact that no more than a very few municipalities have allocated anything in their budgets for staff training. Given limited resources, this is understandable. But it detracts from the desirability of service in the collectivities and does not improve local management capabilities.

The Government of Tunisia is very conscious of the magnitude of the problem and a recent report by Dr. Hatem Ben Salem, Formation et Perfectionnement des Cadres et Agents des Collectivites Publique, Regionales et Locales (1991), made a series of recommendations for new long term training programs and in-service training. Recent changes have been initiated to make service in the collectivities more attractive. The grades to which one can be promoted while working in the collectivities have been improved. Special new training programs have been organized at ENA and new officials recruited to serve at the local level. It is expected that in the near future new texts will be promulgated which will formally establish the improved conditions of employment for these officials.

Elected Officials

The case of the elected officials is not altogether different from that of the local functionaries in that their qualifications and experience are often only marginally related to the municipal tasks they are charged with overseeing. This does not appear to be a major problem in the largest and richest of the municipalities, but for most of the medium and smaller municipalities (the vast majority of all communes) it raises serious issues. As of 1991 there are 3,784 elected municipal counselors throughout the country, including 250 presidents (mayors), 92 vice presidents (heads of the arrondissments which exist in some of the larger

municipalities) and 1,209 assistants (usually committee chairs). The level of preparation of counselors, both academic and experiential, is generally agreed to not be adequate for them to make the kinds of decisions with which they are confronted on a daily basis.

A study of the elected counselors designed to produce a profile and identify their training needs would be extremely useful. For example, although we know that 19 percent (521) of the counselors are female, we do not know how many of them occupy leadership roles, if they are confined to a particular region, type and size of municipality, etc. These and many other important questions, directly relevant to the issue of democracy and governance could be addressed by such a study.

The key leaders of the councils include the mayor (president), the vice presidents and the presidents of the five or six most important committees (commissions). These individuals, in most cases, are the best prepared members of the councils. Even they, however, lack the basic experience and training to effectively perform their functions. Thus, from the standpoint of the elected municipal councils, significant changes or improvements, especially in the capabilities of the committee chairs is essential.

Tunisia's Decentralization Program and the Issue of Governance

Much of what has been written about decentralization in Tunisia has been quite critical of the approach being taken, its implementation, or both (Moudoud, 1989; Nellis, 1985; Larson, 1991; Lakhdar, 1989; Ben Salah, 1989). In this paper we will attempt to use the more systematic measures identified in an earlier section to assess the "quality" of decentralization in Tunisia and hence its contribution, both real and potential to good governance. These measures also provide a relatively sound basis for comparison of Tunisian decentralization with that of other developing countries. The three key factors, scope, intensity, and commitment, and the operational variables which serve as their proxies will be discussed in turn. The critical interactions between factors and the resultant overall impact will then be examined.

Scope

The scope (breadth or coverage) of the program of decentralization, as measured by geographic and population coverage and substantive areas of concern appears to be relatively high. The decentralization program has been applied to almost all areas of the country and to almost the entire

population. Nearly five million of Tunisia's seven million people reside in the 250 municipalities. Only a few rural areas remain outside the purview of municipal or rural councils, and all are included under the umbrella of the regional councils (at least theoretically).

The areas of substantive concern addressed by the collectivities are extremely broad, especially at the regional level, where virtually all development projects and central services come under consideration. The municipal councils have a more limited scope of interest than do the regional councils, but even at the municipal level, the range of issues which are, or can be dealt with is quite broad. For example, municipal councils are involved in issues ranging from water, lighting, and solid waste disposal to libraries, cultural activities, youth clubs, preschools, and the management of markets. In addition, since the mayors of the municipalities all serve on the regional council, they have some input into broader issues of regional development and planning.

On a scale of one to five, with five representing the maximum scope and one an extremely limited scope for decentralization, Tunisia is considered by these analysts as rating a score of 3.5 - 4. This indicates a relatively good scope for decentralization, especially in comparison with many other third world countries.

Intensity

The intensity of decentralization is measured here by the profoundness (type) of decentralization being implemented, the range of public sector personnel interested in it, and the national budgetary implications. Decentralization in Tunisia, as noted above, is strictly limited to deconcentration. Tunisia is a unitary state and as such, all levels of administration are creatures of the state. Regional and municipal councils, although charged with important local and regional tasks, remain the lower rungs in a central administrative structure. The power they exercise could theoretically be withdrawn by the State at any time. The regional levels of the central ministries have also experienced some degree of deconcentration with the setting up of reporting and coordinating responsibilities to the regional governor and the creation of groups like the AIC (Association d'intéret Collectif). However, even with these important steps, the Ministry of the Interior maintains a parallel, highly centralized system based on the older form of prefectural administration. Decentralization is being undertaken in a serious fashion by the state, but in a limited form (deconcentration).

Personnel coverage under deconcentration in Tunisia is limited but

growing. Most personnel in Tunisia's public bureaucracy remain closely tied to the central administrative structures. Even those functionaries (cadres) employed and paid by the municipalities, still figure as part of the Ministry of the Interior. There is no separate regional or local service, but it appears that special statutes and training programs are being prepared to create one. Thus, the coverage, in terms of personnel, is at this time quite limited. Even with separate statutes, the revenues available to municipalities will limit the number of "cadre" level personnel who will be engaged. At the regional level, the councils, rather than having their own administrative staff, share the existing administrative staff of the Ministry of the Interior. Considerable strides in decentralization have been made in the deconcentration efforts of some of the technical ministries, with agriculture and health leading the way. In sum, the personnel implicated in decentralization is limited but growing.

The budgetary implications of Tunisia's decentralization program are quite significant in national terms, but do not appear to have kept pace with the overall growth of the national budget (Nellis, 1985). However, although resources available directly to the municipal councils are limited, some officials in the Ministry of Finance argue that when "indirect" subsidies and contributions to the municipalities are taken into account, the national budgetary implications of local administration have grown very significantly. With centrally funded development projects in the regions now coordinated and managed at the regional level by the governors and the regional councils, finance at this level may also arguably be said to have increased significantly.

The overall assessment of the intensity of decentralization in Tunisia, based on the three measures discussed above, is that it is low to moderate, but increasing. In combination, these measures of intensity seem to be fairly stable, with some suggestion that moderate improvements can be expected in the future. Again using the same five point scale, intensity should be rated between 2 and 2.5.

Commitment

The last of the three major factors, commitment, is operationalized in terms of a set of seven different variables associated with the institutionalization of a program of decentralization. In the case of the first of these, the legal structure, a significant number of texts have been promulgated which provide a relatively clear delineation of the role and functions of decentralized administration at the regional, municipal, and

rural levels. The texts have been revised and modified over the years to both clarify and strengthen the meaning of deconcentration in Tunisia. In sum, a solid legal foundation for decentralization can be said to have been put in place.

The endurance or perseverance of decentralized organs of the state is quite good. It dates from the early days of independence, with several modifications and innovations having been made over the years. The process has not only survived a major regime change in 1987, but has continued to expand. The endurance of decentralization in Tunisia is indicative of a positive value associated with it and hence, of a moderate degree of institutionalization.

The quality of the bureaucratic personnel assigned to the regions and municipalities is, with important exceptions, quite modest. There are as of yet no incentives for working in the regions and no separate statutes establishing conditions for the employment of cadres at this level. Assignment to the regions is viewed as having negative implications for one's career. The overwhelming numbers of municipal employees are laborers, many of whom lack the training necessary for the functions they actually perform. The overall picture is being improved but on this variable the situation is not yet indicative of a high level of commitment by the government.

Finance for the local units, especially the municipalities, is complicated and inadequate to the tasks at hand. Taxing authority is reasonably broad but not fully exploited. However, given the overall financial status of the country and, when comparisons are made with other developing countries, the financial commitment is relatively high.

Elected officials at the local level in all but the biggest cities and the well off suburbs of Tunis are poorly trained and not well prepared to address urban functions. They do appear to serve the representational function to the extent of seeking patronage, primarily jobs for their constituents, and helping in appeals of tax assessments under the tax "locative." This variable, as an indicator of commitment in Tunisia, scores low to moderate.

Official public endorsements for decentralization by top Tunisian officials, including the President, are made quite regularly. Numerous instance of both public utterances and newspaper accounts attest to this. Translating these endorsements into action has been slow but steady. Commitment, in this sense, appears to be moderate or stronger.

There are both formal and informal procedures and opportunities for popular participation in the local policy making process through the

council committees, local associational groups, the party cells, and neighborhood associations. Electoral participation is open but voter turnout is, due to the lack of serious competition, quite low. Overall, opportunities for participation are moderate but growing. How the government handles the issue and contents of new texts for the neighborhood associations, expected sometime in the Spring of 1992, will provide important complementary evidence in this regard.

Evaluation of the various indicators of commitment produces somewhat mixed results. The fact that most of these measures are at least moderate, and some are quite strong, suggests that the general level of commitment to decentralization in Tunisia is relatively high. Furthermore, when compared with other developing countries, especially Francophone countries, Tunisia's commitment to decentralization is very strong. On our five point scale, Tunisia easily rates a 3 or a 3.5 for commitment.

When we try to keep the whole picture in mind and regard the combination of scope, intensity and commitment to decentralization, Tunisia does reasonably well. The quality of decentralization in Tunisia places it in the role of one of the leaders among African and Middle Eastern nations. Although there is a long way to go, there has been considerable progress over the years. It has gone well beyond the stage of rhetoric, and although not universally endorsed by Tunisian political elites and intellectuals, deconcentration has become a valued part of the Tunisian polity. Based on this preliminary analysis, it seems reasonably safe to argue that Tunisia has passed a significant threshold along the way to a fully institutionalized system of deconcentrated power at the regional and municipal levels. To the extent that sound governance is developing in Tunisia, the program of decentralization can be said to expected to be an important contributing factor. Supporting and strengthening of the process of deconcentration as a way of improving governance and strengthening democracy is clearly indicated.

THE MEASUREMENT OF DECENTRALIZATION IN TUNISIA

D = f (S, I, C)

	Scale Score
SCOPE	3.5 - 4.0
Geographic Coverage	3.5
Population Coverage	3.5
Substantive Areas	4

	Scale score
INTENSITY	2.0 - 2.5
Type of Decentralization	2
Personnel Coverage	2
Budgetary Implications	2.5

	Scale Score
COMMITMENT	3.0 - 3.5
Legal Structure	3.5
Endurance	4
Personnel Quality	2.5
Finance	2.5
Elected Officials	2.5
Official Endorsements	3.5
Participation	3

OVERALL SCORE =3.0-3.5

*The quality of Decentralization is a function of the scope, intensity and commitment in a nation.
**Scale scores range from 1, very low, to 5 very high.

Provisional Strategy and Action Plan

Based on the analysis of the system of administrative decentralization in place and the evolution of that system in Tunisia, it seems that decentralization is being taken quite seriously. It is a process which, although far from ideal, is nonetheless capable of contributing to democratic development. Opportunities for citizen and associational group input into the policy making process at the municipal and regional levels have never been greater. The relative strength of decentralization in Tunisia suggests that, with proper support, it could serve to significantly improve the quality of governance in the country.

In the context of decentralization in Tunisia, the municipalities represent the critical building blocks for good governance. They provide many of the key services on which citizens rely, day in and day out. In addition, with the growth of associational groups, especially the "quartier" committees, municipalities provide a greater opportunity for direct citizen participation than any other level of administration in the Tunisian Government. In light of these important developments, a strategy should be developed to provide support to the growth of good governance by institutionalizing decentralized administration. Such a strategy should include efforts to strengthen governance at the collectivity level by increasing the capabilities of 1) elected officials to make informed policy choices, 2) of administrative and technical staff to effectively and transparently implement those policies, and 3) for associational groups to provide input and feedback into these processes. What is suggested here is an institutional strategy to provide high quality, cost effective, independent and enduring assistance to the three sets of critical actors in this process, elected officials, local administrative and technical staff, and non governmental associational groups such as the "quartier" committees.

The primary needs at this point appear to be those associated with increasing the responsive capabilities of municipal and regional councils. Many new municipalities have been created in recent years to address the problems associated with the rapid pace of urbanization and to bring government closer to the people. The greater the level of responsiveness of localities to the needs and demands of the local population, the greater the prospects for the growth of commitment to democratic values and participation. Unfortunately, low voter turnout rates associated with the lack of serious competition during the 1990 municipal elections did not contribute to popular confidence in local elected officials or the

legitimacy of municipal administration. In order to overcome this problem the most immediate needs at the municipal level are for improved capabilities to address the critical policy concerns of the communes and their citizenry. In the longer term, a more open electoral process should be supported.

What are the strategic areas for modification in Tunisia's system of decentralization? An examination of the results of the effort to assess the quality of decentralization in Tunisia gives some indication of the direction in which A.I.D. should consider moving. In terms of scope, there is little that can or for that matter should be done. Geographic and population coverage are both naturally increasing, and near universal coverage can be expected in the not too distant future. The substantive areas of concern for municipal and regional administration are already quite broad. The real question here is whether municipal and regional councils and their associated administrators will be able to successfully manage all of these areas and implement appropriate policies to address the many concerns of the citizenry in their respective geographic zones.

In the domain of intensity, scores tend to be relatively low. There is little likelihood that Tunisia will become something other than a unitary state. Therefore, the type of decentralization will undoubtedly remain some form of deconcentration. However, the degree of local autonomy seems to be increasing quite rapidly. The result may be a type of de facto although not de jure devolution, especially in the larger, more successful, municipalities. The most serious weakness is in the area of personnel. Civil servants working at the municipal and regional level must be given both appropriate training and benefits if the quality of personnel working outside the capital is to be significantly improved. The Tunisian state must also be encouraged to increase its financial commitment to the municipalities if they are to provide the kind of services required.

The final component of the decentralization equation, commitment, is one which, although exhibiting strengths on some measures, also highlights the key areas of concern. What stands out is the relatively low scores for personnel quality and the quality and training of elected officials. This is of course further compounded by the personnel issues associated with intensity. These factors become even more significant in light of the fact that the substantive areas of decision making covered by decentralization are quite broad. Capable personnel, both elected and civil servants, are an absolute necessity if the municipalities and regional councils are to develop and function effectively. Without improvements in the quality of personnel, the quality of decentralization will not improve

and its contribution to good governance and hence democratization will not increase.

Increased popular participation remains a medium and long term objective. Participation can be expected to increase if one of two conditions prevail. If the quality of local service improves and local administration is seen as responsive to local needs, legitimacy will be augmented and participation can be expected to increase. Individuals as well as associational groups will begin to regard local politics as an appropriate outlet for their immediate needs and interests, rather than the current perspective which requires directing attention to the center in Tunis. Alternatively, a failure by these institutions at the local level to respond to local needs, may lead to participation being vented through opposition groups as was the case in Algeria recently.

In light of these findings, what are the most feasible options for A.I.D. to provide assistance which will contribute to the dual objectives of improving the quality of governance - promoting legitimacy and contributing to the development of democratic pluralism in Tunisia. The most important goal ought to be to increase the responsive capacity of local administration. Three tactics seem worth pursuing: 1) improving the quality of elected officials and the civil service in the municipalities and regions; 2) increasing the availability and quality of information available to local decision makers to assess policy options and make informed decisions; 3) supporting the growth of associational groups capable of participating in the political process. These in turn suggest four practical areas for possible support by the donor community.

Human Resources:

1) Training Programs for elected officials which would be initially targeted in three specific directions;

a) orientation training for newly elected counselors which would include notions of democratic governance and representation;

b) management training for the core elected officials of the municipalities. This would be targeted particularly at the president (mayor), vice presidents, and presidents (chairs) of the four or five key committees of each council;

c) specialized training in some key substantive areas such as the environment for the heads and/or members of the environmental commissions.

This training would increase the quality of the representation provided by

the elected officials to their constituents and improve the ability of key commission heads to interface effectively with the technical staff and to operate on the basis of modern management principles (see Kraiem, 1990).

Information

a) Applied Research - Support should be provided in the form of expertise in the area of applied research, particularly policy analysis, program evaluations, public opinion surveys, privatization and private sector relations, organizational issues, financial analysis, the identification of training needs and intra council organization and operations. This would serve to greatly increase the capacity of the councils to respond to popular demands, adjust programs as necessary, identify beforehand the implications of new programs and evaluate existing efforts. It also provides the basis for assessing public opinion regarding priority issues for consideration and enhances the responsive capabilities of the elected municipal officials and the municipalities as a whole. Similar support could be provided to associational groups like "quartier" committees.

b) Documentation and Communications - A documentation center which contains the relevant texts, studies, books, journals, magazines and newsletters from both Tunisia and other democratic countries should be established. This service should be gradually extended to the various regions so that each "gouvernorat" will have its own documentation center. This center and its regional satellites will provide easy access to information and other forms of support to both elected counselors and municipal cadres. The documentation center should also be charged with the task of producing a newsletter which will promote the exchange of ideas, experience, and general information between municipal officials around the country. The use of local radio and the development of special programs to cover municipal issues is also an area worth exploring.

Support for Associational Groups

3) Associational Groups - The same services mentioned above, training of staff and group leaders, and the provision of information and research support services could be provided directly to associational groups or provided in the context of programs targeted primarily at the municipalities and regional councils. Such assistance could serve as a support for the development of national associational groups such as the Federation of Municipalities, local groups such as the quartier committees,

and other local interest groups.

Institutional Support

A Tunisian institution(s) which can provide support to both elected and administrative municipal officials in terms of training, policy analysis, applied research, documentation services and communications is (are) needed. There are very few Tunisian institutions capable of effectively performing all of these diverse but related functions. The Federation of Municipalities is, although attractive on paper, a very weak organization with very limited capabilities (Minus, 1992). While some local private consulting firms might participate at some level in reinforcing the capabilities of the localities, they have limited practical experience in doing so, and lack the broader perspective required. At this point, the University and the private training institutions lack both the interest and motivation to get involved.

Consistent with the goals of privatization and administrative reform, the ultimate objective should be to offer services to municipalities, regional councils, and associational groups on a fee for service basis. However, initially it will be necessary to market these services, adjust them to the needs and desires of the clients, and to demonstrate their value. Therefore, should A.I.D. support such a program, in the short run, during the first two to three years, these services should be provided either free of charge or for a nominal fee. Gradually, during the fourth and fifth years, services can be contracted out and training fees charged at rates more directly related to real costs.

Funding should take one of four forms or some combination thereof:

a) **direct support** in the form of a three year grant to a Tunisian institution(s), either public or private which on the basis of competitive bids appear capable of providing such services;

b) setting up a **permanent endowment**, the interest from which can be used as the core funding for an annual program;

c) grants could be made directly to both Tunisian institutions and to associational groups representing municipalities. The associational groups' support would come in the form of **vouchers/credits** which could be applied toward training, research, and other support from the selected institutions in any combination the groups prefer;

d) Alternatively, **vouchers/credits** issued to municipalities could be used to obtain appropriate services **from whatever source** it is available, including both private consulting firms and public and privately supported training institutions.

In the immediate future, the seemingly most appropriate existing organization/institution in Tunisia to provide the kind of support envisioned here is ENA (Ecole Nationale d'Administration), and more precisely, CREA (le Centre de Recherche et d'Etudes Administrative). This center may be the best choice because it has a relatively high degree of autonomy, is already partially financed by a private non-profit foundation, and has a sound institutional base in ENA, with all of the status associated with that entity. In addition, CREA has broad experience in organizing and implementing training programs.

Within CREA, it would be useful to set up a "Cellule des Etudes et Recherche Interurbain." The Center should have a full-time staff consisting of at least a political science/public administration specialist, a sociologist, an economist and an urban planner. Specialists with other competencies could be brought in for short term assignments as required. ENA and CREA will require some technical assistance to upgrade their capabilities to more fully respond to the expressed needs of the municipalities in all of the domains identified above (training, applied research, and communications). Establishing a linkage between ENA and an appropriate U.S. institution or consortium might be the most efficacious way to address this problem. Such a linkage could be funded through AID's University Center (BIFADEC) linkage program, with support from USIS, with a mission funded linkage, or some combination of these. Under such a linkage, there would be exchanges of faculty, development of new training materials, establishment of a collaborative applied research program, and ongoing training of trainers.

The approach recommended here is the use of CREA as a core around which to build an effective municipal support structure. A multi-disciplinary team acting in response to clearly defined needs identified in a collaborative manner with municipal elected and administrative officials is the ideal. Training, applied research, policy studies, documentation and communication services would all be made available. A system of financing should be selected to maximize both independence from external control and responsiveness to local needs.

Annexes

1) Bibliography on Decentralization in Tunisia

2) Abstracts of the most important Government Texts on Decentralization

3) Tables on Municipal Finance, 1990

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GESTION 1990									
RECETTES		CATEGORIE I	CATEGORIE II	CATEGORIE III	CATEGORIE IV	TOTAL GENERAL 90		REALISATIONS 1989	EVOLUTION NETTE
	RECETTES COURANTES	(n=4)	(n=59)	(n=133)	(n=50)				
	Taxe Locative	8,436,407	5,100,902	903,268	93,243	14,533,820		11,409,537	3,124,283
	Contribution Foncière	330,271	241,148	21,349	3,997	596,765		562,356	34,409
	Taxe sur les Etablissements	6,148,086	3,284,866	929,273	54,478	10,416,703		8,566,265	1,850,438
	Taxe Hotelière	1,156,168	3,271,712	118,485	3,593	4,549,958		4,336,212	213,746
	TOTAL DU CHAPITRE I	16,070,932	11,898,628	1,972,375	155,311	30,097,246		24,939,544	5,157,702
	Taxe sur les Spectacles	82,888	12,046	60,521	10,744	166,199		237,055	-70,856
	Surtaxe sur le Courant	927,459	1,219,057	723,613	37,365	2,907,494		3,480,475	-572,981
	Droit de Voirie	297,215	762,792	355,338	35,799	1,451,144		1,250,104	201,040
	Taxe d'abattage	147,114	616,080	433,155	16,310	1,212,659		1,222,250	-9,591
	T.C.A des Commissionnaires	521,539	772,056	125,494		1,419,089		1,060,344	358,745
	Marchés	3,386,801	7,727,842	3,986,467	223,407	15,324,517		13,398,299	1,926,218
	TOTAL DU CHAPITRE II	5,363,016	11,109,873	5,684,588	323,625	22,481,102		21,166,618	1,314,484
	Quote-part I.F.C (chapitre III)	17,466,832	20,957,088	10,456,152	1,998,988	50,879,060		50,194,719	684,341
	Location des Immeubles	1,135,486	3,250,892	1,575,115	81,985	6,043,478		5,380,548	662,930
	Concessions survole P.	438,814	219,432	51,457	2,065	711,768		718,355	-6,587
	Participations Financières	12,500	142,653	14,650		169,803		216,490	-46,687
	Vente des Immeubles	1,992,915	1,814,043	559,592	26,505	4,393,055		3,931,156	461,899
	TOTAL DU CHAPITRE IV	3,579,715	5,427,020	2,200,814	110,555	11,318,104		11,333,062	-14,958
	Frais de Réfection des Chaussées	91,488	121,905	27,996	1,779	243,168		281,204	-38,036
	Entretien des Branchements	12,387	53,775	57,386	13,246	136,794		142,578	-5,784
	Contribution des Riverains	9,448	121,705	38,464	5,491	175,108		163,115	11,993
	Participation des Maisons de Tolérance	84				84		1,960	-1,876
	Actes d'Etatat Civil	220,811	292,199	274,749	38,691	826,450		791,161	35,289
	Jardins d'Enfants	276,773	501,288	233,546	17,907	1,029,514		967,373	62,141
	Fourrière	316,373	149,883	61,417	5,850	533,523		584,673	-51,150
	Autres Produits	1,351,824	814,002	532,055	43,445	2,741,326		2,232,433	508,893
	TOTAL DU CHAPITRE V	2,279,188	2,054,757	1,225,613	126,409	5,685,967		5,350,463	335,504
	Dons et Legs			150	238	388		18,518	-18,130
	Contreventions Sanitaires	36,726	24,106	11,725	1,082	73,639		68,798	4,841
	TOTAL DU CHAPITRE VI	1,158,439	505,779	199,494	16,076	1,879,788		2,220,670	-340,882
	TOTAL DES RECETTES COURANTES	45,918,122	30,996,057	11,282,884	731,976	71,462,207		65,010,357	6,451,850
	RECETTES EN CAPITAL DES COMMUNES								
	SECTION I								
	Contributions	3,905,126	8,513,729	2,728,346	383,581	15,530,782		15,143,855	386,927
	Emprunts	8,817,399	6,922,855	2,499,758	452,700	18,692,712		13,733,997	4,958,715
	Subventions d'Equipement	1,607,100	7,352,277	5,983,582	1,268,106	16,211,065		16,513,404	-302,339
	Fonds de réserves	2,358,328	17,060,082	8,062,490	1,556,964	29,037,864		33,353,164	-4,315,300
	Revenus Logements Populaires	5,845	27,323	40,430	80	73,678		61,259	12,419
	Quote-Part sur la réserve du fonds commun	4,389,142	1,404,512	263,346	0	6,057,000		6,077,000	-20,000
	Autres Recettes	180,000	93,772	598,039	48,191	920,002		463,298	456,704
	SECTION II								
	Ressources Provenant des crédits délégués	1,245,662	2,300,577	467,248	99,222	4,112,709		3,640,692	472,017
	TOTAL DES RECETTES EN CAPITAL(1990)	22,508,802	43,675,127	20,643,239	3,808,844	90,635,812		88,986,669	1,649,143
	TOTAL DES RECETTES POUR L'ANNEE 1990	68,426,724	74,671,184	31,926,123	4,540,820	162,098,019		153,997,026	8,100,993
DEPENSES	DEPENSES EN CAPITAL DES COMMUNES								
	CHAPITRE I : INVESTEMENTS DIRECTS								
	ARTICLE 1								
	Edsirage	1,017,866	1,261,416	891,907	257,191	3,428,380		3,239,924	188,456
	Res. d'Edsirage	853,581	502,279	474,045	118,485	1,948,390		1,103,549	844,841

Signalisation lumineuse	1,452	38,839	4,658		42,949	638,219	-595,270
ARTICLE 2							
M.V.R	1,929,682	4,872,264	2,880,485	541,558	10,223,989	13,599,327	-3,375,338
Trottoirs	4,702,965	992,716	1,081,562	151,217	6,928,480	2,404,930	4,523,550
ARTICLE 3							
Eaux usées		1,514,595	384,400	109,703	2,008,698	806,556	1,202,142
Eaux pluviales		111,774	34,283	12,772	158,829	541,279	-382,450
ARTICLE 4							
Aménagement	904,374	2,165,332	1,011,324	71,105	4,152,135	2,743,547	1,408,588
ARICLE 5							
Salubrité publique	269,312	879,706	614,826	118,332	1,882,176	1,472,148	410,028
ARTICLE 6							
Batiments administratifs	476,523	923,879	905,425	184,239	2,490,066	2,579,532	-89,466
Jardins d'enfants	27,977	219,403	177,082	53,648	478,110	452,876	25,234
Complexes sportifs	2,489,936	5,907,173	1,737,621	117,800	10,252,530	9,404,121	848,409
Marchés et Cités commerciales	898,064	1,266,195	766,514	250,542	3,181,315	2,955,381	225,934
Abattoirs	108,666	149,634	106,062	54,988	419,350	362,411	56,939
Bibliothèque		444,520	261,988	91,517	798,025	604,795	193,230
Maisons de jeunes et de cultures	228,664	1,762,578	858,420	114,943	2,964,605	2,724,285	240,320
ARTICLE 7							
Acquisitions immobilières	133,578	436,243	104,723	27,413	703,957	772,864	-68,907
ARTICLE 8							
Expropriations	130,095	131,427	14,761	3,585	279,868	588,836	-308,968
ARTICLE 9							
Achat de véhicules	1,085,773	1,089,936	448,108	24,947	2,648,764	2,860,101	-211,337
ARTICLE 10							
Achat d'équipement	1,661,761	963,205	514,769	75,181	3,214,916	3,060,239	154,677
ARTICLE 11							
Autres	492,696	1,951,866	714,512	130,793	3,289,869	3,030,645	259,224
TOTAL CHAPITRE I	17,412,965	27,584,982	13,987,495	2,509,959	61,495,401	55,945,565	5,549,836
CHAPITRE II: OPERATIONS FINANCIERES							
ARTICLE 1							
Prêt capital entreprises		15,000			15,000	46,250	-31,250
ARTICLE 2							
Subventions d'équipement		29,946	109,187	9,539	148,672	140,725	7,947
TOTAL CHAPITRE II	0	44,946	109,187	9,539	163,672	186,975	-23,303
CHAPITRE III: AMORTISSEMENT PRINCIPAL DETTE							
ARTICLE 1							
C.P.S.C.P.L	439,492	1,861,522	574,282	25,016	2,900,312	2,604,848	295,464
ARTICLE 2							
Autres Ets bancaires	2,276,844	399,028	79,890	5,413	2,781,175	3,248,607	-467,432
ARTICLE 3							
	16,428	4,016			20,444	46,148	-25,704
TOTAL CHAPITRE III	2,732,764	2,264,566	654,172	30,429	5,681,931	5,899,603	-217,672
DEPENSES SUR CREDITS DELEGUES	671,425	1,192,059	251,146	59,353	2,173,983	1,961,043	212,940
TOTAL DES DEPENSES DU TITRE II	20,817,154	31,086,553	15,002,000	2,609,280	69,514,987	63,993,186	5,521,801
DEPENSES DE PERSONNEL							
ARICLE 10							
Ind.Présidents et Conseillers	63,540	90,361	110,202	22,226	286,329	301,825	-15,496
ARTICLE 20							
Intérêts de la dette	1,589,722	824,115	220,201	15,136	2,649,174	2,708,168	-58,994
ARTICLE 30 (PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATIF)							
Traitements	4,150,721	4,226,504	2,210,945	263,474	10,851,644	9,460,995	1,390,649
Allocations Familiales							
C.N.R.P.S							
Prime de Rendement	573,708	585,120	292,198	35,100	1,486,126	1,317,296	168,830
TOTAL ARTICLE 30	4,829,389	4,989,211	2,576,302	304,861	12,699,863	11,517,966	1,181,897
ARTICLE 31							
	601,490	652,841	163,123	23,741	1,441,195	1,469,600	-28,405
ARTICLE 32 (PERSONNEL OUVRIER)							

	Traitements	13,937,022	15,162,536	6,625,125	625,613	36,350,296		33,468,998	2,881,298
	Allocations Familiales								
	C.N.R.P.S								
	Prime de Rendement	1,247,869	171,032	487,566	47,060	1,953,527		2,908,186	-954,659
	TOTAL ARTICLE 32	16,147,269	16,868,836	7,280,548	678,357	40,976,010		38,362,717	2,613,293
	ARTICLE 33								
	Personnel contractuel	227,342	188,983	70,211	55,191	541,727		501,822	39,905
	TOTAL DE LA DIVISION II (ARTICLES: 30, 31, 32 ET 33)	21,805,490	22,699,871	10,090,184	1,063,250	55,658,795		51,852,105	3,806,690
	DEPENSES COURANTES								
	DEPENSES DE MATERIEL-INTERVENTIONS								
	ARTICLE 40								
	Batiments	4,353,729	5,207,739	2,034,658	327,490	11,923,616		10,435,705	1,487,911
	bureaux	785,902	948,089	682,348	112,383	2,528,722		1,920,594	608,128
	P.T.T	241,645	190,421	111,197	27,977	571,240		540,795	30,445
	Moyen de Transport	3,802,417	3,913,257	1,402,353	156,690	9,074,717		8,202,831	871,886
	TOTAL ARTICLE 40	10,414,088	11,782,754	4,828,424	699,058	27,724,324		24,009,920	3,714,404
	ARTICLE 41								
		82,763	26,948	21,195	5,370	136,276		141,733	-5,457
	ARTICLE 42								
	Nettoiement	274,267	294,005	221,359	36,364	825,995		834,464	-8,469
	Eclairage	505,131	556,252	151,599	24,372	1,237,354		1,477,633	-240,279
	Chaussées et trottoirs	455,196	246,000	46,708	4,826	752,730		883,852	-131,122
	Fontaines Publiques	40,294	18,356	9,583	14,274	82,507		78,317	4,190
	TOTAL ARTICLE 42	2,325,545	1,810,957	663,519	97,387	4,697,408		4,626,407	71,001
	TOTAL DE LA DIVISION IV	12,822,396	13,420,659	5,513,138	801,815	32,558,008		28,778,060	3,779,948
	ARTICLE 50								
	Subv. de fonctionnement aux entreprises		3,717	1,663		5,380		8,373	-2,993
	ARTICLE 60								
	Intervention /domaine économique	55,694	10,535			66,229		60,201	6,028
	ARTICLE 61								
		9,000		2,550		11,550		13,063	-1,513
	TOTAL DE LA DIVISION VI	64,694	10,535	2,550	0	77,779		73,264	4,515
	INTERVENTIONS(SUITE)+DEPENSES DIV. ET IMPREVUES								
	ARTICLE 70 (INTERV. /DOMAINE CULTUREL ET SOCIAL)								
	Assistance publique	311,619	39,784	24,097	2,789	378,289		471,202	-92,913
	Santé	1,083,632	467,522	149,543	17,697	1,718,394		998,658	721,736
	Culte	180,884	269,652	166,810	29,209	646,555		590,349	56,206
	Culture	451,117	107,921	32,351	4,152	595,541		554,286	41,255
	TOTAL ARTICLE 70	2,027,626	990,264	433,272	62,356	3,523,518		2,865,205	658,313
	ARTICLE 71 (INTERVENTIONS INDIRECTES)								
	Protection Civile	893,292	357,573	16,463				1,173,666	-1,173,666
	Culture	417,750	391,464	214,593	15,424	1,039,231		587,265	451,966
	Sport	653,410	1,546,464	667,330	61,138	2,928,342		3,025,304	-96,962
	TOTAL ARTICLE 71	3,341,070	3,410,176	1,281,929	98,312	8,131,487		7,451,249	680,238
	TOTAL DE LA DIVISION VII	5,378,696	4,400,440	1,715,201	160,668	11,655,005		10,316,454	1,338,551
	DIVISION III								
	ARTICLE 80								
	Coopération entre Communes	113,042	100,272	16,308	2,032	231,654		255,694	-24,040
	ARTICLE 90								
	.....Imprévus	124,209	30,980	2,205	5,000	162,394		29,347	133,047
	ARTICLE 91								
	Dépenses Imprévues		3,682	14,138	1,788	19,608		45,343	-25,735
	ARTICLE 92								
	Contributiondu Titre I au Titre II	3,905,126	8,513,729	2,728,346	383,581	15,530,782		15,143,855	386,927

	TOTAL DU TITRE I	45,866,915	50,094,644	20,412,473	2,455,496	118,829,528		109,512,488	9,317,040
	TOTAL DES DEPENSES POUR L'ANNEE 1990	66,884,069	81,181,197	35,414,473	5,064,776	188,344,515		173,505,674	14,838,841
BALANCE		1,742,655	-6,510,013	-3,488,350	-523,956	-26,248,496		-19,508,648	-6,737,848